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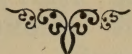


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# *Secrets*



*By the Same Author*

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A SUPER-TRAMP  
CHILD LOVERS

COLLECTED POEMS FIRST SERIES

COLLECTED POEMS SECOND SERIES

FAREWELL TO POESY

FOLIAGE

FORTY NEW POEMS

THE HOUR OF MAGIC

NATURE POEMS

A SONG OF LIFE

SONGS OF JOY

THE SOULS DESTROYER

TRUE TRAVELLERS

SELECTED POEMS



# SECRETS

*by*

W. H. DAVIES



*Jonathan Cape Ltd*

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## *The Poet's Horse*

COME, show the world your mettle now,  
Come, come, my horse of wind and fire —  
Your Master rides no more alone;  
And say, when her young beauty's shown,  
Her weight with mine increased your power.

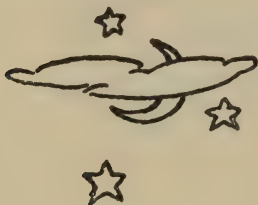
Come from that silver manger, where  
You eat the golden corn and hay,  
To give her mount, who is my Bride;  
Whose beauty makes her fit to ride  
Bareback through Heaven, and twice a day!



## *The Rainbow*

RAINBOWS are lovely things:  
The bird, that shakes a cold, wet wing,  
Chatters with ecstasy,  
But has no breath to sing:  
No wonder, when the air  
Has a double-rainbow there!

Look, there's a rainbow now!  
See how that lovely rainbow throws  
Her jewelled arm around  
This world, when the rain goes!  
And how I wish the rain  
Would come again, and again!



*Love, Like a Drop of Dew*

WHEN I pass down the street and see  
The people smiling so,  
It's clear enough that my true love  
Was there awhile ago.

Her lips that, following her two eyes,  
Go smiling here and there,  
Seem newly kissed – but 'tis my faith  
That none but I would dare.

Love, like a drop of dew that joins  
Two blades of grass together,  
Has made her mine, as I am hers,  
For ever and for ever.



## *The Nature Lover*

THE years passed by, and my pure love  
For Nature did no longer grow:  
"I'll get that love back soon," thought I –  
"By living with more men than now."  
But I made enemies; so I  
Return to Nature, where my pain  
Shall be forgotten, and my love  
For humankind come back again.  
When through the woods and fields I go,  
No thought is mine of human care;  
Under a rainbow's jewelled arch,  
No foe can find a lodgment there;  
And when our fearless nightingales  
Sing in a summer's thunderstorm,  
Like choir boys when an organ's played –  
Where are such tongues as whisper harm?  
So, with this changed and sweeter mind,  
Nature for me has saved mankind.



## *One Token*

THE power was given at birth to me  
To stare at a rainbow, bird or tree,  
Longer than any man alive;  
And from these trances, when they're gone,  
My songs of joy come, one by one.

But what I want I cannot have:  
One token from beyond the grave,  
That hour I neither dream nor sleep,  
To prove death but a veil to hide  
Another life on the other side.



## *Rogues*

THE nearer unto Nature's heart I moved,  
In those sweet days of old, the more I loved:  
The nearer to the heart of man I move,  
As days and weeks go by, the less I love;  
Where can I find a true and honest mind?  
Men rob me, and my Love is still unkind.

You cruel rogues, that come this day to borrow  
A sum that's promised but not paid to-morrow;  
That take like wasps the fruit that's on its way  
Towards my mouth, and never fear my nay –  
Go to that girl and state your happy case,  
That you can see more kindness in my face.

Tell her that though I kiss so wild and oft  
Her flesh that's like a baby's, white and soft,  
Yet kind consideration, at the back,  
Can fear a kiss will bruise and turn it black:  
Go to her, rogues, and show her all the signs  
Where in my face a foolish angel shines.

## *Leaves*

PEACE to these little broken leaves,  
That strew our common ground;  
That chase their tails, like silly dogs,  
As they go round and round.  
For though in winter boughs are bare,  
Let us not once forget  
Their summer glory, when these leaves  
Caught the great Sun in their strong net;  
And made him, in the lower air,  
Tremble – no bigger than a star!



## *At Night*

ONE night I heard a small, weak voice,  
Born into a silent, sleeping world:  
Was it a new-born baby, or  
A new-born lamb, a minute old?

But when I saw the sky was one  
Big loaded orchard of bright lights,  
I almost cried like that young child,  
For Earth, and all her little mites.

The silence of those mighty heavens,  
That infant's cry, so weak in power,  
Made me half wish that Day had brought  
Her sparrow with his common flower.





## *The Pond*

SO innocent, so quiet – yet  
That glitter in the water's eye  
Has some strange meaning there, I fear;  
Did waves run wild and butt this bank  
With their curled horns, when it happened here!

Beneath these heart-shaped lily-leaves,  
In water, lies a broken heart:  
And the one white lily in this place –  
In this deep, silent, leaf-bound pond –  
Is that dead woman's upturned face.



*See Where Young Love*

SEE where Young Love sits all alone,  
And sucks his thumb, and broods:  
And all because you women have  
These ever-changing moods.

See how he sits in this cold air,  
That has the breath of tears:  
Waiting until your mood has changed,  
And one round drop appears.

Till one round trembling tear-drop leaps  
From the corner of your eyes —  
To show your mood has changed again,  
And tears have made you wise.



## *A Miracle*

LET women long for dainty things,  
Expecting twins – content am I:  
I want no more, no more than the sea  
Wants water, that was never dry.  
The ale was strong, and I had three,  
Three glasses only, on my soul!  
I *could* have walked home straight, but still  
Preferred a proud, Atlantic roll.

“Those stars in Heaven are frisking lambs,  
Not flocks of steady sheep,” I think;  
“Poets who call them flocks of sheep,  
Are fools, or either lie or drink.”  
As I said this, the earth broke up,  
And danced in parts, like living things;  
Till, falling on their backs, I twirled  
Around and around, in countless rings.

The worm may turn, it matters not,  
It helps the bird, and nothing more:  
I turned and turned, but still those parts  
Danced faster than they did before.  
Till, rolled and rocked to sleep at last,  
I lost, it seems, my senses nine:  
The sun stood still, in Joshua’s day,  
But how the earth has danced, in mine!

## *The Rivals*

PLEASURE is not the one I love:  
Her laughter in the market-place  
Makes every fool her echo there;  
And from her finger-tips she throws  
Wild kisses in the open air.

Give me that little miser, Joy,  
Who hoards at home her quiet charms;  
And offers with her two soft lips  
A warmer kiss than any thrown  
By Pleasure, from her finger-tips.





## *Earth Love*

I LOVE the earth through my two eyes,  
Like any butterfly or bee;  
The hidden roots escape my thoughts,  
I love but what I see.

A tree has lovely limbs, I know,  
Both large and strong, down under earth;  
But all my thoughts are in the boughs,  
That give the green leaves birth.

My friend, his thought goes deeper down,  
Beneath the roots, while mine's above:  
He's thinking of a quiet place  
To sleep with his dead Love.



## *Love's Payment*

**A**LL fish and fowl, all fruit, and all you  
drink,  
Lie at the bottom of my purse, and I  
Demand at will two kisses for my one;  
This is my certain charge – I swear it by  
Our honest cows, that turn those meadows  
white  
With mushrooms, where they passed a summer's  
night.

Whether it is the seal or silver fox,  
The sable, silk, or plain white calico –  
Two kisses for my one I charge at will,  
Since by my power these changes come and  
go:  
I swear by sheep, that let the brambles pull,  
In payment for their leaves, some soft white  
wool.

## *In Spring-time*

THERE'S many a pool that holds a cloud  
Deep down for miles, to float along;  
There's many a hedge that's white with may,  
To bring the backward birds to song;  
There's many a country lane that smells  
Of beanfields, through the night and day:  
Then why should I be here this hour,  
In Spring-time, when the month is May.

There's nothing else but stone I see,  
With but this ribbon of a sky;  
And not a garden big enough  
To share it with a butterfly.  
Why do I walk these dull dark streets,  
In gloom and silence, all day long –  
In Spring-time, when the blackbird's day  
Is four and twenty hours of song!

## *My Garden*

THE lilac in my garden comes to bloom,  
The apple, plum and cherry wait their hour,  
The honeysuckle climbs from pole to pole –  
And the rockery has a stone that's now a flower,  
Jewelled by moss in every tiny hole!

Close to my lilac there's a small bird's nest  
Of quiet, young, half-sleeping birds: but  
when

I look, each little rascal – five I've reckoned –  
Opens a mouth so large and greedy then,  
He swallows his own face in half a second!



## *The Schemes of Love*

SLEEPING in some green bower, and wrapped  
In wool for twenty breathless years –  
Was that the way your beauty kept?  
You're but a dribbling baby yet,  
My cuckoo-flower with the soft moist mouth –  
Your kisses always leave me wet.  
If Love had time I would not rest  
Until I reached your heart at last,  
And kissed a tunnel through your breast!  
But Life's too short for Love's long dreams –  
How many ages would we need  
To reach the end of one of his schemes?  
Disturbed in life, from morn till night,  
We pass away like butterflies,  
That snatch their kisses in their flight.



## *The Meadow*

**L**EAFY with little clouds, the sky  
Is shining clear and bright.  
How the grass shines – it stains the air  
Green over its own height!  
And I could almost kneel for joy,  
To see this lovely meadow now:  
Go on my knees for half a day,  
To kiss a handfull here and there,  
While babbling nonsense on the way.



## *Cant*

WHAT cant, oh, what hypocrisy  
Is centred in this life of man!  
Self-preservation is his God,  
And has been, since his life began.  
He sits to breakfast with no care  
Of others that have none;  
He keeps more idle rooms than two,  
While *families* live in one;  
He saves his gold, and yet he sees  
Others without a penny;  
He hoards his clothes, and knows full well  
Of children without any.  
He makes his own sweet life secure,  
And then – to crown all this –  
Insults a God by thinking he'll  
Get everlasting bliss!

## *The Trick*

NO answer, yet I called her name,  
I shook her, but no motion came,  
She showed no signs of having breath;  
When, in my fear, the light was sought,  
The hussy laughed: "Is this," I thought –  
"Some strange convulsion after death?"

I could have murdered her that hour,  
To think that she had used such power  
In making me betray a love  
Secret and vast, and still unknown;  
A love half-dreamt, till life is done,  
And only Death himself can prove.

## *Breath*

**H**OW those wet tombstones in the sun  
Are breathing silently together!  
Their breath is seen, as though they lived,  
Like sheep, when out in frosty weather.  
The dead beneath, that once could breathe,  
Are nothing now but breathless bones:  
And is this breath the same as theirs,  
Now coming from their own tombstones?  
So, when the end has come at last,  
And we're consigned to cold damp earth,  
Our tombstones in the sun will show,  
By their vain breath, what ours was worth.

## *The Cave*

ONCE, in that cave, I heard my breath:  
I heard my breath, as cowards do,  
And guilty men; or misers, when  
They sort their old coins from the new.  
Tread softly there: in there a sigh  
Has left a heavy groan behind;  
Each whisper turns to thunder, and  
A whistle to a gale of wind;  
Hold tight your breath, nor cry for help  
Where, though you perish, none may come:  
And softly creep, before you're crazed,  
Back to the open light and home.



## *The World Approves*

THE shade and colour of her eyes can wait,  
It is the light of love that matters there;  
But the spider's threads that catch the morn-  
ing's pearls,  
All for the Sun, could make no finer hair.

Our milk-fed kitten has no warmer skin,  
My neighbour's pigeon has no softer voice;  
Our black-mouthed puppy has no whiter teeth –  
And the world approves of Dinah and my  
choice.





## *Down Underground*

WHAT work is going on down underground,  
Without a sound – without the faintest sound!  
The worms have found the place where Beauty lies,  
And, entering into her two sparkling eyes,  
Have dug their diamonds up; her soft breasts that  
Had roses without thorns, are now laid flat;  
They find a nest more comfortable there,  
Than any bird could make, in her long hair;  
Where they can teach their young, from thread to thread,  
To leap on her white body, from her head.  
This work is going on down underground,  
Without a sound – without the faintest sound.

## *The Fear*

OF T have I thought the Muse was dead,  
Nor dreamed she ever needed sleep;  
And as a mother, when she sees  
Her child in slumber deep,  
Wakes it, to see one sign of breath –  
So did I think of my love's death.

Sleep, sleep, my love, and wake again,  
And sing the sweeter for your rest;  
I am too wise a parent now  
To think each sleep the last –  
That you are dead for ever, love,  
Each time you sleep and do not move.



## *The Fates*

WHEN I was lying sick in bed  
The Fates said, "Come we'll have some  
sport.

Your mother's life," they said, "is done:  
You have no strength in hand or foot,  
And she is calling for her son."

A second blow struck down my love,  
And she was taken from my side —  
The one who watched me night and day;  
And strangers came and offered help,  
But all their love was talk of pay.

And then the Fates struck out again:  
They filled these strangers with distrust,  
That I had done my love some wrong:  
"Ah, cruel Fates," thought I, "you lose,  
For now you make my spirit strong."

Straight up in bed I sat and smiled,  
And heard them whisper, "See, he smiles,  
We dare not strike that man again;  
Another blow and he will laugh,  
Our Master, in his scorn of pain."

## *The Two Stars*

DAY has her star, as well as Night,  
One star is black, the other white.  
I saw a white star burn and pant  
And swirl with such a wildness, once –  
That I stood still, and almost stared  
Myself into a trance!  
The star of Day, both seen and heard  
Is but a little, English bird;  
The Lark, whose wings beat time to his  
Wild rapture, sings, high overhead;  
When silence comes, we almost fear  
That Earth receives its dead.



## *The Rabbit*

NOT even when the early birds  
Danced on my roof with showery feet  
Such music as will come from rain –  
Not even then could I forget  
The rabbit in his hours of pain;  
Where, lying in an iron trap,  
He cries all through the deafened night –  
Until his smiling murderer comes,  
To kill him in the morning light.



## *To a Lady Friend*

**S**INCE you have turned unkind,  
Then let the truth be known:  
We poets give our praise  
To any weed or stone,  
Or sulking bird that in  
The cold, sharp wind is dumb;  
To this, or that, or you —  
Whatever's first to come.

You came my way the first,  
When the life-force in my blood —  
Coming from none knows where —  
Had reached its highest flood;  
A time when any thing,  
No matter old or new,  
Could bring my song to birth —  
Sticks, bones or rags, or you!

## *The Two Heavens*

WHEN, with my window opened wide at  
night,  
To look at yonder stars with their round light,  
In motion shining beautiful and clear –  
As I look up, there comes this sudden fear:  
That, down on earth, too dark for me to see,  
Some homeless wretch looks up in misery;  
And, like a man that's guilty of a sin,  
I close my blinds, and draw my body in.  
Still thinking of that Heaven, I dare not take  
Another look, because of that man's sake;  
Who in the darkness, with his mournful eyes  
Has made *my* lighted home his paradise.





## *The Doll*

DINAH is young, and I am old;  
She takes two cushions to attack  
Me, and her kisses close my eyes;  
She combs my hair, that still is black.  
Ah, my poor child, you do not know  
The state of your live doll;  
When you are gone out shopping, he  
Sits thinking of it all.  
The cushion-fights will soon be done,  
He'll need a pillow for his head;  
And fingers, not your kisses, love,  
Must close his eyes, when he lies dead.  
You'll not sit laughing on his knee  
To comb his hair when white as snow,  
Or when a few thin hairs remain  
Of all its tangled blackness now.  
Blinded by his young spirit, you  
Can see no signs that he must die:  
Your doll, my child, will make of you  
A serious woman, by and by.

## *The Snowflake*

WHEN we are young and wake from sleep,  
What pillow-fights we share with Life!  
We laugh and punch, and never dream  
How Death can end that joyful strife.

We'll not let Time destroy that dream,  
But in old age our spirit brave  
Shall, like a snowflake in its fall,  
Dance while it hovers o'er the grave.

Contented men are still my theme,  
Who – though too poor for ivory keys –  
Still whistle with their naked lips  
Their happy tunes of careless ease.

## *Secrets*

**H**AD I secret plan by which,  
In pressing a small button, I  
Could wreck this world entire – would not  
That button, with a snake's bright eye,  
Flutter my bird-like finger down,  
Till I, bewitched and uncontrolled,  
Must press with sudden impulse, and –  
Good-bye, my pretty world!  
If Dinah knew how great my love is,  
My worship of her small white face,  
Which deserts of grim silence hide,  
And many a waste of commonplace –  
Would she not serve me some mad trick,  
To test my passion's utmost power,  
And break that silent world of love  
In one weak foolish hour?

## *Our Longer Life*

SOME little creatures have so short a life  
That they are orphans born – but why should  
we

Be prouder of a life that gives more time  
To think of death through all eternity?

Time bears us off, as lightly as the wind  
Lifts up the smoke and carries it away;  
And all we know is that a longer life  
Gives but more time to think of our decay.

We live till Beauty fails, and Passion dies,  
And Sleep's our one desire in every breath,  
And in that strong desire our old love, Life,  
Gives place to that new love whose name is  
Death.

## *When Love is Young*

**I**, *WHO* had eyes to wander here and there,  
No longer have my vision unconfined:  
Love brings the first grave thoughts of majesty  
Into the free republic of my mind.

*The time is grave with doubting of my power  
To serve her well, that she may always smile:  
Love-at-first-sight is oft, as hundreds know,  
Made Love-lies-bleeding, in too short a while.*

*Some day I'll take love easy, as a child  
Will drink his mother's milk while half-asleep:  
But when Love's young he's troubled — like Old  
Age —  
With breath that's short, that still no time can  
keep.*

## *Dust*

IF Life is dust, is not dust Life?  
We're walking on the backs of living things;  
On things that live we sleep.  
I kick a stone that – were its life released –  
Could in its fury leap  
Into my face and be a frantic beast.  
What things lie sleeping all around,  
That may awake at last  
And, joining in our mortal strife,  
Defend their rights as living dust!



## *Pity*

**T**HOUGH you are gone and I am left alone,  
With but this shadow by my body thrown,  
And nothing more;  
Though you are gone, and I am feeling poor,  
Yet still the root is fed  
Of my self-love, and but the leaves are dead.

But if, when I am old, and in the street  
With a new love that's young, we three should  
    meet;  
And she should say,  
"Who's that old hag that stares so hard this  
    way" —  
What answer should she meet?  
May I drop dead in pity at your feet!



## *The Joy of Life*

**H**OW sweet is Life, how beautiful,  
When lying curled in innocent sleep!  
Without one thought that, soon or late,  
Death will unbend that graceful curve  
And stretch him out, all stiff and straight.

Go, happy Life, and say to Death –

“I gave this man sufficient joy  
To last him for a thousand years.”

Then ask him why my time’s as short  
As one whose breath is full of tears.



## *Violet and Oak*

DOWN through the trees is my green walk:  
It is so narrow there and dark  
That all the end, that's seen afar,  
Is a dot of daylight, like a star.  
When I had walked half-way or more,  
I saw a pretty, small, blue flower;  
And, looking closer, I espied  
A small green stranger at her side.  
If that flower's sweetheart lives to die  
A natural death, thought I –  
What will have happened by then  
To a world of ever restless men?  
“My little new-born oak,” I said,  
“If my soul lives when I am dead,  
I'll have an hour or more with you  
Five hundred years from now!  
When your straight back's so strong that  
    though  
Your leaves were lead on every bough,  
It would not break – I'll think of you  
When, weak and small, your sweetheart was  
A little violet in the grass.”

## *Evil*

**H**OW often in my dreams have I beheld  
An enemy with a grinning, loathsome face;  
And then, before the dream is over, lo!  
A smiling friend has taken that enemy's  
place.

So, when unkindness comes my way, I think  
Of an enemy first; but in the end  
It follows, two to one, the secret blow  
Is struck by one who calls himself my friend!

Call me a Nature poet, nothing more,  
Who writes of simple things, not human  
evil;  
And hear my grief when I confess that friends  
Have tried their best to make a cunning  
devil!



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WOOD



